

**“THE SUBMISSIVENESS OF GODLY WIVES” Part 1**

**HOLINESS  
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March 20, 2015**

**Bruce:** Good morning, men!

**Men:** Good morning!

**Bruce:** I’ll try to get hold of this meeting again. (*Laughter.*) Don, do you want to take us into a moment of silence, as we just be still and know that He is God?

**Don:** Yes. Ted, my apologies to you. But since we’re talking about submission, I have to play it. (*Don plays “I Surrender All.”*)

**Bruce:** Father, in the quietness of these moments, we just sit and reflect, and realize that You are God. We are Your servants. You call us to be submissive to You and Your grace and Your mercy. We thank You, Lord, that our salvation is because of transformation, not because of some affiliation with some church. It is because of the gospel of grace that we submit ourselves to You this day, trusting that You’ll help us with our unbelief. Open our eyes, that we might behold You more clearly, for Christ’s sake. May it be so for God’s glory. Amen.

**Men:** Amen.

**Bruce:** Several of you asked me if I would teach the portion which we skipped over a couple of weeks ago, dealing with godly wives and their submission. We’ll do that today.

The reason I chose to teach us about our responsibilities first, in 1 Peter chapter three, is so that we would understand that it is our responsibility to create an environment where our wives will want to be submissive to us. Of course, they can’t do that apart from the grace of God. We understand that. But it is our responsibility to create an environment that puts them in a position to want to do those things, as opposed to our having to legislate them doing those things. So that’s why I want to go back and teach this portion today, on the submission of godly wives.

So I invite you to turn in your Bibles, please, to 1 Peter, chapter three. We’ll look at verses 1-6. This is the word of the Lord.

**Men:** Thanks be to God.

**Bruce:** “Likewise, wives, be subject to your own husbands, so that even if some do not believe, or obey the word, they may be won without a word by the conduct of their wives, when they see your respectful and pure conduct. Do not let your adorning be external, the braiding of hair and the putting on of gold jewelry, or the clothing you wear. But let your adorning be the hidden person of the heart, with the imperishable beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which in God’s sight is very, very precious. For this is how the holy women who hoped in God used to adorn themselves, by submitting to their own husbands, as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord. And you are her children, if you do good and do not fear anything that is frightening.” May God be pleased to open our eyes, to see Him more clearly, for Jesus’ sake.

**Men:** Amen.

**Bruce:** One of the difficulties that Biblical feminists have is that they have a tendency to take the Scripture out of context. And there are probably no other verses in the

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Scripture where they do that more than in this particular passage. They remove the glory and power of sensing why a sovereign God has stipulated the divine order for the family, and the ruling of the family structure.

A case in point is this passage today. We’ve got to understand where this passage fits in the midst of the whole book of 1 Peter, or you’ll take it out of context. So let me remind you of this.

In chapter 1, verses 1-12, we see the character of our salvation. It’s a glorious and sovereign salvation.

Peter starts off by reminding us that everything flows out of our understanding of our salvation. So in chapter 1, verses 1-12, it’s the character of our salvation.

And then, in chapter 1, verse 13 to chapter 2, verse 10, it’s the claims of our salvation, and that would be our holiness. So the understanding of salvation leads to holiness, and holiness leads to submission. That’s the flow of the book.

And then, you come to chapter 2, verse 11, all the way to chapter 4, verse 11. It’s the conduct of the saved.

So you have the character of our salvation, you have the claims of our salvation, and then the conduct of the saved. And that conduct is described in chapter 2, verse 11, to chapter 4, verse 11, with one word, one concept, and that’s the concept of submission.

Now Peter is not outdated by writing to the first century believers about submission. He’s revealing how we are to regulate our relationships in the family, made holy by the gospel of Christ, participating with God in the redemptive process by living submissive lives as citizens, as workers, and now as wives and husbands. The whole concept is submission to society. It’s not just picking on wives, or picking on husbands. It’s about submission as citizens, submission as workers, submission as wives, and submission as husbands.

Now Peter gives us three reasons in these particular verses, 1-6, as to why women are to be submissive to their husbands, as God’s sovereign design. First of all, it’s an ordinance. It’s a heavenly ordinance. You’ll see that in chapter 3, verse 1. It is a heavenly ordinance.

Secondly, it’s an earthly opportunity—chapter 3, verses 1 and 2. And thirdly, it’s a spiritual ornament—chapter 3, verses 3-6. It’s an ordinance, it’s an opportunity, and it’s an ornament. So let’s examine those.

First of all, it’s a heavenly ordinance—verse 1. The very first reason is that, in God’s wisdom, God has commanded us to have our wives be submissive. That’s His divine order.

Now I do want to say something. I taught this course recently to a mixed study of men and women in a Bible study. I had several women come up to me afterwards and say, “Would you teach that in our church to our teenage daughters, because our pastor won’t touch that, because he said that the women would be upset. Would you come and teach our daughters this?”

I don’t know if I’ll have a chance to do that, but they were so moved by the Spirit of God working in them, saying that this is something their daughters need to hear at a young age, not at our age. “Would you come and teach that?” Now whether or not that

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happens, I’m not sure. But the point of it is that the church oftentimes will not even touch this subject because it is not politically correct. It’s not culturally correct.

Last week Bishop Rodgers and I were talking about the change in our culture. And Bishop Rodgers, if you don’t mind, could you give us that four-step review that you just talked about, going from faith to reason to natural science? Listen to this, because this is the culture in which we’re trying to teach the divine, sovereign order of the family, and why there is so much rejection and so much animosity to what we’re going to learn today. Bishop Rodgers?

**Bishop Rodgers:** I was just saying that, from about 300 A.D., when Western civilization began to shape itself, and the debate really, in the culture, was about God’s revelation, all the way up through the Reformation. There were differences. But one thing that was clear was that God was a fact, not just an opinion.

**Participant:** Mm-hmm.

**Bishop Rodgers:** Then the Enlightenment, in the eighteenth century, shifted from God and His revelation as the Rock and the Light, out of which we did our thinking and arguing, we shifted to human reason. It became an idol for us. Because our human reason is human, it is limited. It’s good. It’s a wonderful gift when it’s sanctified. But it’s limited.

Then we shifted in the next century, the nineteenth century, more to the Romantic movement, to intuition and to ourselves, and our sense of things as our idol.

And then, in the twentieth century, and even into the twenty-first century, we shifted to natural science. Now natural science is also a gift of God. Actually, if we had time, I could show you that it’s really the child of the Christian revelation, using that and bringing that in, which is God’s gift. But it’s assumptions are basically Christian. But it’s a poor god, because it does not deal with ethics, or with people. It deals with forces, impersonal forces, and how they interact. Can I give one example?

**Bruce:** Please!

**Bishop Rodgers:** If I ask you, “Why is the water boiling on the stove?”, you could say to me, “Because at sea level, a certain amount of BTU’s should get rapid evaporation.” Or you could say, “Because Aunt Minnie wanted that cup of tea, and she put it on the stove.” You can do BTU’s until you’re blue in the face, and you’ll never bump into Aunt Minnie, because that method does not deal with persons. It just can’t.

So what we have done culturally, now, is buy into and make natural science the truth, and where fact lies. Everything else is just personal subjective opinion. That means God and people. We have no way to justify public ethics, or to talk about God as a fact, and not just an opinion. But God is not just an opinion. And if we have done that, we have excluded God from all public areas of our culture. No wonder we don’t pray in the schools. We have already bought into it. We’re an idolatrous culture.

**Participant:** Yes, sir.

**Bishop Rodgers:** We’ve lost it, and we need to challenge that straight out.

**Bruce:** Amen. Thank you. That’s important for us to understand the context of why we’re going to talk about something that is so politically incorrect, so culturally incorrect, and that is to talk about godly submission on the part of wives.

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Now again, men, this is the environment. I want us to listen to this, because this is the environment that you and I are to create in the family, so that the wives will find it easy to want to do this. Now understand that they cannot do this apart from the grace of God, so I'm not saying that this is a work. That's not what I'm saying. All I'm saying is that you and I have a responsibility to love them with honor, to love them with understanding, and to respect them with dignity, so that it makes it easy for them to want to do what God has designed them to do. Now they cannot do that apart from the grace of God. However, you and I do have a responsibility to create an environment where this can be easier than more difficult. Don't make it difficult on your wives to want to be subjected to you and submissive. That's our role, and we need to understand that.

So I want to take us through this very carefully to understand the significance of this. But I wanted you to hear from Bishop Rodgers about the culture which we're up against, which is so idolatrous, because idolatry is trusting someone or something to give you only what God can give you. It is trusting someone or something,--and now it's natural sciences; we're trusting natural sciences as the thing that we expect to give us only what God can give us. God is the only One that can give us healthy family relationships. Natural science is not going to do that. It's not going to do that. And that's why it's so important that we understand what the Biblical doctrine is about the separation of the husband's responsibility from the wife's. And today we want to talk about godly submission on the part of wives.

Now notice. The very first thing that God says is this: that it is a heavenly ordinance. The first reason is that God, in His wisdom, has commanded women to be submissive to their husbands. You see that in verse 1.

The Greek word *submissive* is really a military term. It means to line up in position for protection, to line up under rank. It's the correct understanding of this word, *hupataso*. It means to line up under rank for the protection of. In other words, when you line up in a military operation, if you're scattered all over the place, you're going to be likely to be destroyed. But if you come together in a rank authority position, where you're lined up for protection, you have a better chance to win.

Essentially, what Scripture is saying is this. A woman needs to come under the protection of her husband, because that's the divine order. And therefore, the way that she does that is that she lines up under his authority.

This word is about authority and position, not about evaluation. It has nothing to do with evaluating the worth of the woman, or the worth of the female. It talks about her protection. God has sovereignly protected her by creating a structure, a rank by where, when she falls into that rank, she is protected. When she removes herself from that, she's out of the protection of God's sovereign design.

And what frustrates me is that the Biblical feminists are removing themselves from the protection that God has ordained for them in the structure of the family. And so the very first thing he says is that this is a heavenly ordinance. You do this because God has sovereignly commanded it. It has to do with rank. It has to do, in the spiritual sense, not with dictatorship. It's not about dictatorship, but the loving exercise of Divine authority,

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under the Lordship of Christ. You and I need to exercise our Divine authority under the Lordship of Christ. It’s not about dictatorship. That is not the environment we create.

Submission has to do with the order in authority, not with the evaluation of the woman’s well-being or her status.

You’ll notice, in verse 7, that she is a co-heir of the grace of life. Now that’s not inferiority. Submissiveness is not inferiority, as the world teaches it. They have the same Creator. They have the same basic materials from which they are made. Both are made in God’s image. Both are given dominion, and are one in Christ.

Cross references would be Genesis chapter 1, verse 28, and Galatians 3, verse 28.

Submission, brothers, has to do with their lining up under the headship, under the protection of their husbands. Do you realize that that’s one of our responsibilities, to protect our wives?

**Participant:** Amen.

**Bruce:** We do that by the loving exercise of our authority position that God has given us as the head of the family. We protect them. And therefore we have to create an environment where they sense this protection. It’s not a battleground of dictating what they do, or legislating what they do. It’s providing an environment of protection, so that they will *want* to do this. They have a willingness to do it. You give them a will to want to do this.

Now again, it can only happen with the grace of God, so this is not a work I’m suggesting. All I’m saying is that we need to create the right environment. And to do that, we put them in a position to be more willing to want to be submissive.

This is not a lessened position on the part of the wife. As we saw in the creation ordinance, man is given the headship position. The wife is given the helper position. Man is given the authority position. She is given the influential position. The woman has more influence in the family than the man does, positionally. She is the one of influence. She’s going to influence how everything happens in the home, and that’s by design, because her position is not to be the authority position. Hers is to be the influential position, where she brings all the things that are going on into the family with the children, all the finances, all the things that are going on, and brings them to the authority position of the husband, who is the head, who makes the wise, loving decisions for the protection of the family. She is in the influential position, which is far more important, sometimes, than the authority position. But it is not an inferior position. It is not inferiority. It has to do with position and structure.

Notice, in the same way. I want you to go back to 1 Peter, chapter 2, verses 21-25. I want you to see something, because here is where the feminists run into problems, because they take things out of context. Go back to 1 Peter chapter 2. Let’s look at the beginning of verse 21.

“For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you might follow in His steps.”

Now what’s the idea here? Jesus is an example of something. What is the something where He is an example for all of us? It’s going to be about the example of (*pause*) submission.

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Notice. Verse 22. “He committed no sin, neither was deceit found in His mouth. When He was reviled, He did not revile in return. When He suffered, He did not threaten, but continued entrusting Himself to Him who judges justly. He Himself bore our sins in His body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By His wounds you have been healed. But you were straying like sheep, but have now returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls.”

Now what’s the next word? “Likewise!” What does that mean? It means you’ve got an example of doing something. Likewise, do the same thing! What’s the very first thing he says to the women? “Likewise!” Christ just gave you an example of submission. This is what it’s like. You’ve got a model of how to do it! You don’t figure out how to do this yourself! You’ve got a *model* of how to do it! “Likewise!” They forget the word “likewise!” They end chapter two, and do not read chapter three. The word “likewise” is a transition from the example of chapter 2, verses 21-25, on what the wife’s responsibility is, and it’s the same thing for the men!

Notice down in verse seven. “Likewise, husbands.” You see, we’ve got an example in Christ! That’s our example of submission!

This whole point that Peter is making is this. When you understand your glorious, sovereign salvation, you’re going to demonstrate that in the character of your holiness, and the holiness is going to manifest itself in submission—submission as citizens, as workers, as husbands, and as wives. Yes, please?

**Participant:** We often talk about Christ submitting to the Father, but He also submitted to His parents as a Child.

**Bruce:** Absolutely.

**Participant:** Here is the Creator of the universe submitting to a sinful mother and father.

**Bruce:** At His Incarnation, He submitted to His parents. We don’t know much about Jesus’ life between the ages of twelve and thirty-three, except this. “He grew in wisdom and stature, and favor with God and man.” Where did He do that?

**Participant:** In the home.

**Bruce:** In the home, in subjection to His parents.

We forget the word “likewise!” And so the feminists omit that word “likewise.” They say, “That’s inferiority.”

Now let’s carry this to another logical conclusion here. This is not inferiority. It means that we copy Christ. He is the One who demonstrates submission as an elevated position. Christ elevates submission. He doesn’t de-elevate it. He doesn’t detract from it. It’s not an inferior position. He elevates the whole concept of submission. That’s what the word “likewise” means. You’ve got an example. Follow it; copy it. Emulate it; be like it. That’s part of our calling for holiness.

Remember, the whole theme of the book of Peter is holiness. The way that you and I demonstrate our holiness is by being submissive, because Christ is our example. It’s the word “likewise.” The reason it’s elevated is because of the God who wills it, and determines it as an ordinance.

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Now let me carry this to a logical conclusion. Nothing Christ ever did was inferior. Nothing Christ ever did, or does, was, or is, inferior. And to ascribe inferiority to submission is to belittle Christ’s obedience to the Father. It is to belittle Christ’s obedience to the Father. When somebody says that submission on the part of wives is an inferiority complex, an inferior understanding, it is an affront to the Person and work of Christ, because Christ is the Model of submission. And when we do not teach this, we’re basically saying that Christ has done something that is inferior.

What is Christ’s nature? It’s sinless perfection and perfect obedience. To say that submission is inferior is an affront to the Person and work of Christ, in His holiness and His glory.

Do you understand that? It’s the word “likewise.” And, you know, we let the church get away with it, by saying that it is an inferior position. This church says that you can’t teach that to our women because they won’t stand for it, because they’ve gotten this idea that it’s inferiority. That’s an affront to Christ, men! It’s a personal affront to the work of Christ! He does nothing that’s inferior! Whatever He does is sinlessly perfect, and perfectly obedient, and to ascribe submission as something inferior is an affront to the Person and work of Christ.

It’s the word “likewise.” You’ve got a Model. It’s a model for women; it’s a model for men. Christ is our Model. So we need to take this very seriously.

Another reason submission was not meant to be inferior is that, in the Roman culture, and the Roman household, slaves were often superior in status in many ways to their masters, yet they were told to be submissive. Some were doctors. Some were lawyers. Some were physicians. Some were artisans. But they were slaves. They were told to be submissive, because it’s a demonstration of what? It’s a demonstration of the Person and work of Jesus Christ, in His holiness. He does not make submission inferior. He *elevates* it! Submission for us is an elevated position, because of the model of Christ. “Likewise, wives.” “Likewise,” men, he teaches us. It’s a heavenly ordinance, to be submissive.

Now let me read you something from history. When you’re doing your hermeneutics, the study of a Biblical passage, there are three things you want to look at. We look at the historical background. What’s going on historically at the time that this passage was written?

Secondly, what is the grammar of the text, and some of the word definitions? I just gave you some of that, what the word *hupataso* means, and submission, what that means. You study those word meanings.

And thirdly, what is the context? I try to help you understand the context of these particular passages. Chapter 3:1-6 deals with the concept of Christ being the model of submission, and He elevates that position of submissiveness. That’s the context.

Now let me give you some historical background. I’m reading from one of the historians of the Roman church.

“It may seem strange that Peter’s advice to wives is six times as long as his advice to husbands. That was because the wife’s problem was far more difficult than that of the husband.

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“If the husband became a Christian, he would automatically bring his wife with him into the church, and there would be no problem. But if a wife became a Christian, while her husband did not, she had taken a step which, in the ancient world, was unprecedented, and which produced the acutest problems for her.

“In every sphere of ancient civilization, women had no rights at all. Under Jewish law, a woman was a thing. She was owned by her husband in the exactly the same way he owned his sheep and his goats. On no account could she leave him, although he could dismiss her on any account. For a wife to change her religion, while her husband did not, was unthinkable.

“In Greek civilization the duty of the woman was to remain indoors, and to be obedient to her husband. It was the sign of a good woman that she must see as little, hear as little, and ask as little as possible. She had no kind of independent existence, and no kind of mind of her own, and her husband could divorce her almost at caprice, just as long as he returned her dowry.

“Under Roman law, a woman had no rights. In law, she remained forever a child. When she was under her father, she was under the *patria potestis*, the father’s power, which gave the father even the right of life or death over her. And when she married, she passed equally to the power of her husband. She was entirely subject to her husband, and completely at his mercy. Cato, the censorer, the typical ancient Roman writes, “If you were to catch your wife in an act of infidelity, you could kill her with impunity without a trial.””

“Roman matrons were prohibited from drinking wine. And Ignatius beat his wife to death when he found her doing so. Sopitius Gallus dismissed his wife because she had once appeared in the streets without a veil. Antisichus Vestus divorced his wife because he saw her secretly speaking to a freed woman in public. Publius Simonius Sophis divorced his wife because once she went to the public games without him.

“The whole attitude of ancient civilization was that no woman could dare to make any decision on her own. What then must have been the problem of the wife who became a Christian, while her husband remained faithful to his ancestral idolatry and gods? It is almost impossible for us to realize what life must have been for the wife who was brave enough to become a Christian and embrace Christ.”

What then is Peter’s advice in this case? We must first notice what Peter did not advise her. He did not advise her to leave the husband. In fact, we see that the same reason for being submissive here is the same as it was as a citizen, as a worker. It’s an earthly opportunity to demonstrate the fact that you’re another worldling, that you’re a follower of Christ, and that He has changed your life, and that He has transformed you into His glory. It’s a wonderful opportunity to be calling attention to Christ, and the power of grace in your life.

Now that’s the context in which Peter is writing those verses. And we think we have it bad in our culture? Listen to that, and what does he say? “Likewise!” He doesn’t say, “Look at your situation.” He doesn’t say, “Look at the laws.” He says, “Likewise.” You’re an other worldling. You’ve been transformed by the grace of God. You are now

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in a position to demonstrate your heavenly ordinance with an earthly opportunity. There's an earthly opportunity.

Every heavenly ordinance is an earthly opportunity for ministry. That's why we are not instructed to be overly concerned in getting out from under the circumstances in which we find ourselves. Our response is what? “Likewise!” You don't focus on the situation. You focus on the Savior. That's what empowers you with God's grace, to take a heavenly opportunity, turning a heavenly ordinance into a heavenly opportunity for ministry.

The key word is that little word “likewise.” “Likewise, wives.” “Likewise, husbands.” Here is your opportunity to demonstrate the fact that your life has been transformed by the glory of God, and now you can demonstrate with an act of holiness a changed culture, because that's what it's designed to do. Every heavenly ordinance always leads us to a heavenly opportunity.

Let's see how that works. Look at verses 1 and 2. An opportunity for witness and worship in the home. Notice that he says, “that they may be won without talk by the behavior of their wives.”

Not only does God command submission, but He also uses submission as a powerful spiritual witness and influence. That's why the woman is in a position of influence. He uses spiritual ordinances and commands as a powerful spiritual reference, an opportunity of influence.

Here's why. The reason God commands it is because God plans to use it. That's why you have a heavenly ordinance, which always leads to an earthly opportunity.

Why is it, men, that we need to be likewise submissive? God commands us to be that, to submit our lives to Christ, where we create an environment where our wives want to do this for God's glory. We do that because God plans to use it.

So let's look at what he says to the husbands in verse seven, just briefly. “Likewise, husbands, live with your wives in an understanding way.” Why is it a command? Because God is going to use that.

“Showing honor to the woman, as to the weaker vessel.” Why does He command that? Because God is going to use that.

“Since they are heirs with you of the grace of life.” Why does He command and remind us of that? Because God is going to use that. It's not about their equality. It's about their influence position in the family. You and I are the heads; they are the helpers. They have the position of influence. We have the position of authority. It's a divine ordinance, because God has planned to use it.

And notice. “So that your prayers will not be hindered.” So every divine ordinance always leads to an earthly opportunity.

Wives, in their situation, are to live with a special goal in their submission, and that is this: spiritual influence. That's why they do it. It's because of the concept of spiritual influence. That's what Peter is saying. The reason, wives, likewise, is that there is one goal in mind. Not to get your husband to do what you want. It's so that God will use this heavenly ordinance as an earthly opportunity of spiritual influence. The woman is in a

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position of influence in the family. God will use the spiritual influence of the wife to change the family demeanor in the family devotions, in the worship activity of the home.

Now this phrase “without a word” does not mean without the word of God. But “without a word” means without a lot of speaking, without a lot of nagging, or spiritual manipulation to get what they want. Notice what it says. “When they see your respectful and pure conduct, they may be won without a word by the conduct of their wives.” It’s not talking about the word of God. It’s talking about their nagging.

The proverb says this. Once is a request. Two is a reminder. Three is a nag.

My father taught me, when I was a kid, that the character of a man is “don’t gripe, complain or blame.” I wish he’d added, “no nagging.” (*Laughter.*) I remind my wife at times. “The first time is a request. The second time is a reminder. The third time ...” (*Laughter.*) “I’m not paying attention to it.”

Do you know what she does? I won’t even tell you. (*Laughter.*)

**Participant:** A wise man! (*Laughter.*)

**Bruce:** That’s when I claim my life’s verse, Exodus 14:14. “I will fight for you while you remain silent.” (*Laughter.*)

**Participant:** Amen.

**Bruce:** So it doesn’t mean that you’re talking without the Word. It’s talking about the spirit of the person, the spirit of the wife. Brother, it’s a style of life. It’s a style of worship. It’s a life of purity before your husband, with reverence before God that gets the man’s attention. She gets the man’s attention because she’s in the position of influence. It’s a life of purity and reverence. That’s the husband seeing God. He doesn’t see her; he sees God. That’s why it’s an earthly opportunity.

Who converts people who don’t believe? The wife doesn’t do that. God does. “Likewise,” for her, is to put her into a position of a strong spiritual influence in the family. God will use that.

It’s what we’ve been saying all along. Submission reveals the righteousness of God. Yes, Don?

**Don:** Bruce, since these first two verses are talking, it seems to me, mainly about unbelieving husbands, is there anything here, since most of us are believers, if not all of us here, is there anything that believing husbands can benefit from?

**Bruce:** Oh, we will benefit from the spiritual influence of our wives, absolutely. One of the greatest spiritual influences in my life is my wife. I think she’s the primary means by which God is refining my spiritual character.

**Participant:** That’s right.

**Bruce:** That’s her position of influence. You see, to the believing husband, it’s the same thing. To the unbelieving husband, God might use that for evangelism in salvation in the converting of the husband. It may happen. That’s part of the spiritual influence, the Scripture says. For the believing husband, it’s going to be spiritual influence to have us become more godly leaders. It’s going to motivate us to want to do what verse seven says. It says to live with your wife with understanding, honor her and respect her. That’s what will happen with the influence of the godly husband. She will put us in a position to want to do our job more effectively, because of her spiritual influence.

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**Participant:** Amen.

**Bruce:** It works both ways. The important thing is this. Brothers, it’s a heavenly ordinance that has an earthly opportunity, because every ordinance God is going to use. Her position is one of spiritual influence, if she’s a believer. She’s going to have more spiritual influence in the family than you and I will, because she creates the environment for us to fulfill our leadership responsibilities, and exercise our headship. It’s a powerful position that she’s in. It’s not inferior, and to suggest that submissiveness is inferiority is an affront to the Person and work of Christ, because He did not do anything inferior. He elevated the concept of submission.

**Participant:** Bruce?

**Bruce:** Yes, Ted?

**Ted:** I think my wife has the greatest impact in influencing my spiritual growth and development, even when she reminds me three and four and five and six times.

*(Laughter.)*

**Bruce:** Well, I’m glad you handle that better than I do. *(Laughter.)*

**Ted:** That doesn’t mean I enjoy it. But it does begin to wear you down.

**Bruce:** It does. Yes, sir?

**Participant:** I honestly struggled with even coming to this lecture this morning, but I knew that if I did, you’d help me to understand it better, and I appreciate what you’ve said so far. The reason that I struggle with it is that, in my life, and the examples of the marriages that I’ve seen, where the wife was submissive, the marriages pretty much went to hell because of the particular, let’s say, addictions—

**Bruce:** The particular what, please?

**Participant:** I would say addictions, and personal problems of the husband. Where they do succeed, the wife is anything but submissive. The reconciliation I’m coming to in my head—and correct me if I’m wrong here!—would be similar to when Christ—I’m terrible at this!—what was His act when He turned the tables over in the temple? I can’t remember exactly when that was. And again, I’m no Biblical scholar. I’m trying to figure out if that is His form of submission by saying at that time that this was the appropriate action. So I guess I’m trying to reconcile these strong-willed women who basically save the lives of these people that I know, and in my family, who were not submissive. Is that a form of submissiveness, or am I just not understanding the concept?

**Bruce:** Well, how does your question change things? Let me read this Scripture.

**Participant:** Sure.

**Bruce:** “Likewise, wives, be subject to your own husbands,” unless you see a model that doesn’t work. And when that model doesn’t work, you don’t have to be submissive. How does your question change anything? It doesn’t change a thing.

**Participant:** I didn’t follow that.

**Bruce:** In other words, I’m saying that you don’t use the model of a failure to determine what is right. The doctrine is right here in front of us. Wives, do that. Now how that’s going to work out in a woman’s life, I have no idea. All I’m saying is that this is a heavenly ordinance that God gives her to do, and when she trusts that, God is going to use it. Now you can’t use the model of failure as an example of what we need to do.

## “THE SUBMISSIVENESS OF GODLY WIVES” Part 1

I have a friend who is an FBI—

**Participant:** Give the failure example. I’m sorry.

**Bruce:** You just gave one. You said that husbands, because of the addictions, their families went to hell. You don’t use that as your model. There’s your model.

**Participant:** I’m actually using the model of the ones where the wives were not, shall we say, under a context, submissive as a successful model, and I’m trying to reconcile that model with the Scripture. And I guess what I’m asking you is, am I mistaking them for being strong in the positions to improve the family? Am I being too technical here?

**Bruce:** Yes.

**Participant:** Is that a form of submissiveness?

**Bruce:** You would have to give me the example of every failure you’re talking about. I can’t respond to that, because I don’t know that example. All I’m saying is that you go back to the Scriptural standard. What is the standard?

Brothers, we don’t know how every family is going to work. You have to go with the standard. The standard is this. Wives will do that. God will use it. That’s all I can say. It’s a function of His grace.

I have a friend who is an FBI agent, who is a counterfeit dollar bill expert. You can give him a hundred one-dollar bills, and he’ll find the one that’s not good. And the reason he does that is because he studied that which is the model, the standard, so he could recognize that which is improper.

It’s the same thing. We need to study the standard, so we recognize that which is improper, which is invalid.

So I don’t know. I can’t answer your question. All I’m saying is, that is our standard. You go back to the model of the standard, and you don’t look at the model of what is failure. Ted?

**Ted:** I’m just wondering if this begins with a bigger principle or a bigger issue here. And we encounter this all the time. And that is that the experience of something, the practicality of something, determines the truth of something.

**Bruce:** That’s right.

**Ted:** And I’m reading right now through the life of Jacob in Genesis, a very disturbing story, actually. You should dig into it. It’s about his own failings, yet God still used it. Yet we would not want to become a deceiver, like Jacob. We wouldn’t want his example to set the standard. God’s standard still prevails, no matter what the experience is, or the practicality of it.

**Bruce:** Great. Thank you. Bishop?

**Bishop Rodgers:** I was just thinking that—

**Participant:** We have two Bishops there. (*Laughter.*)

(**Transcriber’s Note:** The last name of one of the men is Bishop.)

**Participant:** We want the real Bishop. (*Laughter.*)

**Bruce:** Bishop Rodgers, please? Go ahead, Bishop Rodgers.

**Bishop Rodgers:** We’re not saying that a wife should be submissive to a husband who is beating her.

**Bruce:** Correct.

## ***“THE SUBMISSIVENESS OF GODLY WIVES” Part 1***

**Bishop Rodgers:** There are occasions where faithfulness to Christ is as true today as it was for the apostles. There are some things you cannot be submissive to.

**Bruce:** Correct.

**Bishop Rodgers:** If that’s what you’re saying, then what being submissive to Christ would require is that you not be submissive to somebody who is doing ungodly things.

**Bruce:** That’s correct.

**Participant:** That’s exactly the question.

**Bruce:** That’s what I’m trying to get to.

**Participant:** I think that gets missed in a lot of this.

**Bruce:** It does.

**Participant:** Colloquially, broadly. And that’s the conclusion I came to, and I wanted to see if that was similar.

**Bruce:** You cannot make your experience be the determination of what is the standard. Each one of those is specifically different, and you have to respond accordingly. It may be, I mean I’ve counseled a wife to separate from her husband because of the very thing that Bishop Rodgers is suggesting, abuse in the home. And I said, “You’ve got to leave for your own protection. We’re going to work on that while you’re gone. But right now, the best thing for you to do is to leave, and we’ll work on that while you’re separated. We’ll try to get you back together.” Yes, please?

**Participant:** Would you go back to the culture of Rome that you read earlier,--

**Bruce:** Yes, sir.

**Participant:** For a woman to come to know the Lord, would it be correct to say that she is going from a culture of duty, as a wife, to a transformed servanthood in Christ now, and it’s that transformed where Christ can be seen in such a way that it has a powerful impact that the world can’t match?

**Bruce:** Yes, it’s a transformation.

**Participant:** She trusts Him in that process.

**Bruce:** Absolutely. It’s a transformation process.

**Participant:** And from a human perspective, that process may fail in regard to the way we do things.

**Bruce:** Correct. That’s correct. Yeah. It’s a transformation. Yes, please? The other Bishop? (*Laughter.*)

**Don:** What I was thinking of with this question you raised, and was introduced is, is a wife being submissive when she confronts her husband when he is doing wrong?

**Bruce:** No. Is she being submissive? It’s how she goes about it.

**Don:** Yes.

**Bruce:** That’s what we’re going to talk about next. That’s the ornament of spirituality that we need to talk about, because it’s how she goes about it. Remember, she is in the position of influence. So that means she has the responsibility, as a submissive wife, to come to her husband with this information. The question is, how does she go about it? We’ll talk about that next, because, if you look at the sequence, it goes from an earthly opportunity to a spiritual ornament. It’s how she goes about it. So forgive me. I didn’t quite understand your question. Was that helpful to you?

## ***“THE SUBMISSIVENESS OF GODLY WIVES” Part 1***

**Don:** Yes.

**Bruce:** Yes, please?

**Participant:** Bruce, the thing that always helped me,--

**Bruce:** Mm-hmm.

**Participant:** In regard to this discussion is, and I think Ephesians speaks to this in Ephesians 5. “Wives, submit to your husbands, as to the Lord.” And then, in Ephesians 5:25, “Husbands, love your wives.”

**Bruce:** Yes. As Jesus loves the church.

**Participant:** As you said earlier, the husband has to love the wife, and the wife submits. If that’s not working, and if the husband is not loving the wife, then it’s difficult, if not impossible, for the wife to submit.

**Bruce:** Ephesians 5 is a wonderful passage on the same concept of submissiveness that Peter is teaching us. It basically means this. If you and I do not understand Christ’s relationship to the church, we will never understand our roles as either husband or wife. You’ve got to understand Christ’s relationship to His church. The Scripture says this. “Husbands, love your wives as Christ loved the church.”

Now do you understand how Jesus loved the church? Men, if we don’t understand what that means, what that looks like, and what that is, you and I will never love our wives that way.

**Participant:** Amen.

**Bruce:** So go back and look at Christ’s loving the church. What did He do for it? He died for it. He sacrificed for it. That’s what you and I need to do for our wives, and the degree that you and I understand His relationship to the church will be the degree to which we will create an environment where we will make submissiveness, on their part, something that will be a joy, not a frustration. It will be a joy. Yes, sir?

**Participant:** Submissiveness, as you mentioned earlier, is a military term. And this is a military situation. All eyes,--men, women, children,--are on Christ. And if everybody is following that precept that God gives us, as outlined here in Ephesians, if the hubby is doing what he’s supposed to do, in Christ, and the wife is doing what she’s supposed to do, they will gladly line up in that military order. I was in the military. If somebody dropped out, for whatever reason, everybody just moved on up.

**Bruce:** Yes.

**Participant:** You stepped up, but we followed the leader. And that’s Jesus Christ.

**Bruce:** Yes. See, this is designed for her protection.

**Participant:** Yes.

**Bruce:** It’s an authority position designed for her protection, that she is in this role. And what we need to do, as men, is to create the environment where this is something that she wants to do, and willingly wants to do it. That’s our responsibility.

So let’s not pick on them, and say, “They should be doing this.” Let’s find out if I’m creating the environment where they want to do this, so it becomes a joy, not a labor or a frustration. And am I loving her like Christ loved the church? That’s my Model. And the key word here is the word “likewise.”

**Participant:** Amen.

## **“THE SUBMISSIVENESS OF GODLY WIVES” Part 1**

**Participant:** Bruce?

**Bruce:** Yes, please?

**Participant:** I know, Bruce, in my struggle, being, as God assigned me, ordaining me as the spiritual leader of my house, I remember Don saying this over here one morning, that the church is full of men who are out there on the knees of their wives.

**Bruce:** Yes.

**Participant:** And this kind of reminds me of what we’re talking about here. She really has an influence over me. And really, even though I have the authority, I should be the spiritual influence on my family, but my wife really is.

**Bruce:** Hopefully, they will motivate us to want to fulfill our headship role.

**Participant:** Amen.

**Bruce:** They will motivate us to want to do that. Yes, please?

**Participant:** Isn’t it also important to note that as a wife, she may have an unbelieving son or husband? And the husband may have an unbelieving wife. In both cases, you’re still to love, or to submit. And for the wife, her submission comes out of the joy of her relationship with the Lord, right? And then, with the husband loving his unbelieving wife, she may not show any form of love to him, but he submits himself to love her. In both cases, the attitude can be upheld by God.

**Bruce:** We need to be careful not to nitpick this to death. (*Laughter.*) Because, when you do that, you begin to create more problems than you do solutions.

Here’s a summary statement. The conduct of the saved wife, (submission), reveals the consequences of salvation, (holiness), which points to the character of salvation, (a living hope), which points to the Savior. That’s the whole big picture.

Let me give you that again. The conduct of the saved wife, (submission), reveals the consequences of salvation, (holiness), which points to the character of salvation, (a living hope), which points to the Savior. That’s her position of spiritual influence.

Now the real question is this. The sequence that Peter is talking about is that you have a heavenly ordinance, which leads to an earthly opportunity, which leads to a spiritual ornament, how she is dressed internally. The beauty of the wife is internal, not external. We’ll talk about that next week.

So I hope I haven’t opened up a can of worms. I just trust that the Lord will be pleased to help us understand that our role is to create an environment where they will want to do this willingly, and have it be a joy, not a labor or a frustration.

May it be so that the Lord will give us the grace to understand what we need to be.

Let’s pray. Father, help us understand the word “likewise.” You’ve given us a Model. Submission is not something that is inferior. The Lord Jesus Christ Himself, because of His submissive attitude and spirit, elevated the concept of submissiveness. May we elevate it for Your glory, and our own benefit, and for the glory of the family, and the salvation of the people You’re calling to Yourself. And may it be done for Jesus’ sake. Amen.

**Men:** Amen. (*Applause.*)